

Tourism Workforce Assessment Forum

Flagstaff

May 5, 2005

Discussion Topic 1: Recruitment, Retention & Succession

What non-traditional strategies do you use to recruit entry-level employees?

- We give cash remuneration for referrals
- 50% of hires come through referrals
- We use J-1 visa program recruiting and also the H2-B programs. We go to seasonal areas and job fairs to recruit
- We seek culturally diverse workforce, we go to historically black universities and go to reservations and try to recruit students in high school and college
- We are starting a school apprenticeship program to give training to high schoolers to give them a taste and move them into these positions
- With the devaluing dollar the J-1 has been more difficult
- Not too much of a problem for us, many from Ecuador and Thailand and Eastern Europe
- The problem is there is a 66,000 person limit on H2-B visas, which is a problem because winter places get people first, so places with summer season needs get the leftovers

What non-traditional strategies do you use to recruit management employees?

- We have a formal management succession program and it's competitive. We support internal promotions
- We have internship opportunities we started as a mentor program. And we have bonuses for recruiting other managers
- Internet is traditional...difficult to get people who don't have computers, like on the reservations and such

Besides wages, what factors contribute to employee turnover?

- Burnout. In our area recruitment is difficult. By the time that people finish their work weeks after the training/internships, they are done. And the additional demands affect their workload. Not just entry level, it's across the board throughout community
- Housing, quality of life, housing, continuing ed., medical services. This is Grand Canyon area. Housing is same issue for Williams.
- We subsidize our housing for employees
- Access to basic services
- Lack of training and orientation is a culprit and quality supervision, there's a lot of supervisors missing. There are issues with hiring practices.
- Money isn't there. They work hard and generally what we find is that entry level job hop because 25 cents more an hour makes a difference to them. It really affects turnover.
- Quest for future... why have people stayed in the past?
- Programs, training, good hiring practices, they invest in their front line people and give great benefits. Day care or flex time is important, as is medical insurance.
- We need to make the jobs fun.
- Some cultures offer rotation of jobs. Focus isn't on job, it's on the family and everyone takes a turn.
- Seasonality has a lot to do with Phoenix and Flagstaff markets. Over 100% turnover, wage and benefits are not as important. It's a transient community. Spouses move and people go with them.

What are you doing/could you do to attract young people to consider a career in the tourism industry?

- Bringing high schoolers to work and exposing them to the hotels, all-day forums and having them talk to different people in the industries. To let them know about different opportunities in this industry.
- National parks—step program to show them parks programs and see if we can find a fit.
- We are looking at future workforce; research is talking about new generation. We find a big interest in the community, how do we get them with that
- People at entry level see the jobs as short term. They don't see it as a career, but working with high schoolers to get them there. Educate...and getting these kids out to the community to get a taste of it.
- Does anyone do intern programs and offer jobs and season jobs?
- Yes, we do it.
- Lots of schools say that businesses aren't offering these opportunities
- Our industry is not as flexible. We may need to change that as an industry
- Many people don't understand the community aspect of the tourism industry

- We're working to get teachers into the industry and educate them because the teachers are telling the students that it's not a good industry, no longevity. Example: teachers didn't know the pay scale and were giving students the wrong information. And many of these teachers don't have the experience within the industry to know what they are talking about
- In New Orleans, waiting tables is a career and you work your way up, but here it's a passing position.

How are you preparing employees for advancement in your organization?

- We need to cross train to expose them to different parts of the business
- Prepping for advancement is in the hand of the supervisor (almost completely). Most places don't have programs formalized, it isn't (IDP-individual development plan),
- We should have top-level people work their way so that they understand
- Many top-level people don't have the education cause they worked their way
- We use a 12-18 month rotation program; people work in different departments and have learning plans, to see all aspects of the job/organization. By the time people get through the program, we have an opening and they are prepared for it.
- Is not having English a barrier?
- Some employers are helping with language issues by paying for language courses.
- Maybe we should learn Spanish.

Are there jobs that a guest worker program would be especially well-suited to fill?

- Obviously at lower-level areas. It's essential that this go to the governor. We have 23 openings, and this is crisis. Too many limits recruiting abroad and people won't take these jobs. This has to be done.
- We have 1200 employees in a town of 1000 (Ha! Ha! Ha!), culinary is our challenge. Basic culinary.
- Plenty of people here if you are willing to risk hiring an illegal
- The process to hire to get people [is part of the problem]
- The senate action is a huge threat. It seems to be a serious topic.
- Proposed legislation to put responsibility on businesses [won't fix this]. We need to be able to get these people to do these jobs. Our kids won't take these jobs; we teach them that these are not good jobs/careers. No dissent to any of these comments...

Discussion Topic 2: Industry Trends

How do changing travel preferences affect your workforce and training needs?

- We have a large travel agency, and the two largest changes are technology and public is demanding unique experiences and want to know recommendations, personal references. Not just training, they want to know what employees have done and their recommendations
- The traveler today is so educated and knowledgeable. They expect and demand more and pay more. We find that education and training levels are not meeting the standard of expectation. Lots of businesses are struggling with this. [Aero]mark has been able to do a one-on-one training with customers to do something like driving house boats
- Booking time is shrinking. People are looking for same day reservations, lead time is decreasing
- This booking window shrank after 9-11, people are leaving their options open
- Not too many security issues here
- Internet bookings have increased significantly also. Didn't exist 5 years ago

What other social trends (cultural, environmental, political, economic, demographic, etc.) do you anticipate impacting your industry?

- There is a change in demographics. Many companies are looking to diversify their employee base to reflect their customers. Amex is doing the same thing.
- Customers are also more environmentally conscience- ex, we are seeing less throwing of towels on the floor
- There are some amazing demographic trends that are traveling now, and businesses are starting to cater to. People want to be educated and they want their trips to have meaning
- Northeast region: kiss, bow, shake hands, book to teach/training on cultural training. Language issues too
- Lots more children traveling with parents, we notice that at visitors center
- Along with that, there's a lot of demand of tolerance. There's an expectation that we tolerate misbehaving children. People expect you to tolerate that!
- We have small families and we see lots of senior travel. We've had to ban children in some cars because when you pay \$150 for a seat, you don't want to put up with that. (train)

- Cheap and chic, people are shopping around. People are looking at all-inclusive. People are looking for same service everywhere for less money. Expectations are going up. Prices are going down.
- Following 9-11, there's less individual travel, lots of family travel.
- Intergenerational trends...baby boomers are expected to put more demands on travel/hospitality industry

What new jobs are emerging in your company or industry?

- Parks service filled a director of tourism job in Washington D.C.
- Director of kids
- A huge opportunity is Internet managers and tech managers
- Our staff has on-staff interpreters to run programs where funding doesn't allow for it
- A new thing we're starting is that there's lots of "looks and no books" so we're staffing someone to talk as people navigate. It's expensive to keep people after hours, there's more of a need for after hours
- I can see an opening for child entertainment (summer job for teachers/retired teachers?)
- At snow bowl so parents can ski without kids and elder hostel network. It's in place, we're going to see it flourish
- In 2004 we created a new department—activities
- Cruise ship industry is ahead of the game. They've been doing it for years. Look at Disney for example

Over the next five years, what jobs and job skills areas are being phased out from your company or industry?

- We're a hands-on industry, we won't really change much with technology other than how jobs are performed—we need people
- I think we'll see automated check in and you'll see less people, especially at night. They could be doing something different, or eliminate the job entirely.
- Pay telephone collectors
- What about robot vacuum, it's been experimented. I could see that in the future
- At the chamber we see an explosion is people coming in. This year, the state is growing so quickly and people are really coming in. I don't see people with money and want great experiences. They want to know about the community. We have 500 people per week looking for personal experiences. We need to give our employees this experience

What impact will aging of workforce have on staffing in your industry?

- We need to accommodate people; we have morning people, afternoon, night people. We have to be more flexible as we hire more people
- Managers are retiring, gets back to question to training and succession management
- The effect on AAA is that if there are no technology skills, it becomes a challenge to train and open them to learning these skills. They are good and loyal but they need to learn it.
- The classes are there for older people to get them online
- You have to train "on the job" for computer skills
- Flexibility is key; we've got 40% of our workforce looking for work, but only half time.
- And physical labor in some jobs isn't working for older people
- Double nickels program at Coconino Community College to teach older workers computer software/hardware

What intergenerational issues affect your workforce?

- Young people listening to rap and in the next cubicle listening to other music, how we deal with these issues and clashes
- The older generation being supervised by younger generation. Young people don't know how to supervise them, different speed, technological background. We need to find a way for them to meet in the middle
- We need to communicate. We need to make them aware of the cultural differences. It will help by raising awareness
- It is different values: older people can learn from younger people and some can't do that well
- The problem isn't in work force; the problem is in the older workforce. Their careers are very military like. Young people are more touchy-feely, more open-minded. It's generally the inflexibility of older baby boomers. Seniority is a big deal. To young people they know the work and have the education

Discussion Topic 3: Staff Development & Training

What are you currently doing to train and update the skills of your employees?

- Sending employees at least once a year to external training programs
- We have both internal and external, orientation, customer service. Standards. Position-specific, defensive driving, etc. leadership classes, career management processes,

- National park services offer a variety of courses where you can call in. Technology makes it easier and cheaper to do training courses
- If we can get people to do short training and go back and see what they've learned from it
- We have a group come in 4 times a year to do management training/seminars, especially front line managers
- Some employees are looking for training while others push against it
- We use trade journals and other such periodicals for people to keep up with trends in the industry
- Mentoring new people and using them to train
- Mentor programs are great but they fizzle. Effective and ineffective...follow through is the key

What educational partnerships does your organization currently have, and how could these be improved?

- Where we haven't done well is with the scholarships in the community. We've talked about working with the university and even high schools to give scholarships
- The chamber is looking at a seminar series to do skills training. The chamber has an education committee again and we're looking at building partnerships
- Ditto for Williams
- Coconino Community College has an HRM program and we haven't really linked up with key industrial partnerships/private sector as we develop curriculum
- NAU has a partnership program with community colleges statewide
- ARHA has a program; it behooves employers to contact ARHA to let them know what you are looking for and the partnership opportunities. There's LOTS of money to sponsor through scholarships with stipulations for pay back
- Need more communication in the community. We have to break through the barrier

What needs do you or your customers have that you are unable to meet because your employees don't have the necessary skills?

- One area I see is there seems to be a lack of basic math and analytical skills. They can use a computer, but they don't know how to do basic functions
- Verbal communication is inadequate. There's a generational communication gap
- I would go further with communication skills, even in change in shift there needs to be that communication
- Different languages are helpful from time to time. The barrier is more culture not language
- As far as language, lots of people want written materials in different languages
- Face-on-face communication, English is fine; we're finding requests for written as well
- I would like to see that hotels emergency instruction/evacuation to go out to all hotels

What can be done to help prepare younger members of the workforce to appropriately service the needs of your customers?

- Communication
- Customer service
- Intergenerational
- Not all kids want to go to college, recognizing it and embracing it as an opportunity
- Giving young people the opportunity to remain in their home community, not a need to move out
- Do any new training techniques [exist] for young people?
- More multimedia, no more 8 minutes
- Computer training is helpful. In the educational system, we need to get some assistance in training people on work ethic: get to work on time, work and go home on time.
- They are looking for meaning, even if its short-term work, they want meaning. It's hard to find the fulfillment in the job.
- That's why older people have problems with ethics of young because young people are looking for something that we never looked for
- Bonus after certain periods of time

What can be done to help aging members of the workforce to appropriately service the needs of your customers?

- Older people need diversity education. Ethnic diversity. Older workers are less tolerant of change
- Working with int'l employees we see this too
- Rather than isolate aging, I present it to all. "The stress of organizational change", this has helped The whole workforce is better prepared by preparation
- The biggest frustration is this new litigious society. Harassment...the laws that provide employees an easy way to sue. It's more pronounced and what is the solution? Age discrimination and others issues are becoming serious
- The temptation is to just pay off people because it's easier and you pay less. And then word spreads and everyone starts doing this

How will technology affect your staff training and development capacity?

- Safety training and tests. Then it records who's tested and passed
- Park services is leaning on interactive satellite training with people on east coast. No longer need to travel
- Depending on subject, training needs are different. Some technology is good, some people interaction is good. Need practical experience alongside training
- It makes it harder to get everyone on the same page when you use technology. Not everyone embraces these new methods

Closing thoughts

I've sat in on manufacturer forums, healthcare providers and the common thread is applied math, communications. I'm taking that to heart and getting it back to the educators

Educational facilities and businesses need to work together

Scholarship by restaurant association exists